

IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 28-48 are pending in the application. In response to the above described restriction requirement, Applicant withdraws claims 44-48 and elects to continue prosecution of claims 28-43. In accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.121(c)(i) and (ii), and the USPTO's revised format for amendments¹, a complete listing of all claims (marked-up and indicating the status of such claims) appears below. Of the pending claims, claims 28 and 37 have been amended as set forth below.

Claims 1-27 (canceled).

C1 Claim 28. (currently amended) A process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers comprising the steps of:

providing fibers to be stretched in the form of a fiber sliver;

providing at least one fluid;

guiding the fluid to the fibers to be stretched; and

entraining the fibers to be stretched with the fluid so that the fluid exerts at least a portion of the tensile force necessary to cause stretching of the individual fibers in a stretching direction.

Claim 29. (original) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 28, further comprising the steps of:

¹ see "Final Rule: Changes To Implemented Electronic Maintenance of Official Patent Application Records", 68 Fed. Reg. 38611 (June 30, 2003).

moving the fibers so that certain sections of the fibers move faster than other sections of the fibers; and

entraining the fibers with the fluid at the faster moving sections.

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Claim 30. (original) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 29, wherein the entraining comprises a force component in the stretching direction that causes inter-fiber cohesive forces of the fibers to be less than the total entraining tensile forces subjected to the fibers.

Claim 31. (original) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 28, further comprising the steps of:

moving the fibers so that certain sections of the fibers move faster than other sections of the fibers; and

entraining the fibers with the fluid at the slower moving sections.

Claim 32. (original) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 31, wherein at least one fluid exerts entraining force components opposite to the stretching direction.

Claim 33. (original) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 28, further comprising the steps of:

moving the fibers so that certain sections of the fibers move faster than other sections of the fibers; and

entraining the fibers such that the same fluid is used for restraining the slower fibers and for acceleration of the faster fibers.

c/ Claim 34. (original) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 28, wherein the fluid is selected from the group consisting of water, air, and a combination of water and air.

Claim 35. (original) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 28, further comprising the step of:

moving the fibers so that certain sections of the fibers move faster than other sections of the fibers by restraining a section of the fibers by a force action selected from the group consisting of mechanical, pneumatic, and electrostatic forces.

Claim 36. (original) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 28, further comprising the step of:

carding the fibers by making at least partial use of the same fluid that is used to entrain the fibers.

Claim 37. (currently amended) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 28, wherein before the fibers are stretched by the fluid, the fibers are put into a at

least one configuration selected from the group consisting of fibers, fiber flocks, and a fiber band.

Claim 38. (original) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 28, further comprising the steps of:

providing a stretch chamber in which to perform the step of entraining the fibers by the fluid; and

introducing the fluid into the stretch chamber by use of an injector.

Claim 39. (original) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 28, further comprising the step of:

circulating the fluid in a recycle circuit.

Claim 40. (original) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 28, further comprising the step of:

treating the fibers with an additive for the lessening of cohesion between the fibers.

Claim 41. (original) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 28, further comprising the steps of:

providing a stretch chamber in which to perform the step of entraining the fibers by the fluid; and

providing a spinning apparatus to spin the fibers before the step of entraining the fibers by the fluid; and

circulating the fluid between the spinning apparatus and the stretch chamber.

Claim 42. (original) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 28, further comprising the step of:

drying the fibers after the step of entraining the fibers by the fluid.

Claim 43. (original) The process for providing stretching forces to textile fibers of Claim 28, further comprising the step of regulating the flow of the fluid.

Claim 44. (withdrawn) An apparatus for applying stretching forces to textile fibers comprising:

a stretch chamber having an inlet and an outlet in which fibers are stretched, the fibers are moved into, through, and out of the stretch chamber;

at least one fluid supplied to the stretch chamber which moves through the stretch chamber, the force of the fluid exerts a tensile force on the fibers which acts to stretch the fibers; and

a feed entry proximate to the stretch chamber for providing the at least one fluid to the stretch chamber.

Claim 45. (withdrawn) The apparatus for applying stretching forces to textile fibers as set forth in Claim 44, wherein the stretch chamber has a plurality of stretch chamber sections which change in diameter in the direction of travel of the fibers.

Claim 46. (withdrawn) The apparatus for applying stretching forces to textile fibers as set forth in Claim 44, wherein the inlet and outlet of the stretch chamber and the feed entry are provided with seals.

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Claim 47. (withdrawn) The apparatus for applying stretching forces to textile fibers as set forth in Claim 44, further comprising:

- a transition hood in communication with the feed entry and the stretch chamber;
- a fiber supply container in communication with the transition hood; and
- a sealing arrangement that seals the transition hood and the fiber supply container.

Claim 48. (withdrawn) The apparatus for applying stretching forces to textile fibers as set forth in Claim 44, further comprising at least one diversion vane for directing at least one of the fluids either in the same or opposite direction to the direction in which the fibers are stretched.